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**LETTER OF REV. JAMES MAURY TO PHILIP  
LUDWELL, ON THE DEFENCE OF THE  
FRONTIERS OF VIRGINIA,<sup>1</sup> 1756.**

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Contributed by WORTHINGTON CHAUNCEY FORD.

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Louisa, 10 February, 1756.

To the Hon. Philip Ludwell.

Honourable Sir,

However misbecoming it may, in general, be thought in such, as act only in a private Station, to intermeddle in Affairs of a public Nature; yet, when our Country is in Danger, to ward it off seems to be an Object of common Concern. Hence I trust, any Member of the Community will be deemed pardonable, at least, in shewing a Readiness to forward the Accomplishment of that desirable End. With this view and Expectation then, I am about to take the Freedom to offer to your Honour's Consideration some few Particulars, with which, peradventure, the great Distance between Williamsburg and those Parts of the Country, which are most immediately affected by them, may have prevented some Gentlemen, who share in the Administration, from being so thoroughly

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<sup>1</sup>Rev. James Maury was minister of Fredericksville parish, Louisa county, from 1754 until his death in 1770. He was an energetic man of high character and scholarly attainments, and was one of the most prominent of the colonial clergy of his time. He is now best known as the plaintiff in the suit in Hanover, under the "Two-penny Act," in which Patrick Henry first attained public note. He was ancestor of Matthew F. Maury. Philip Ludwell, to whom the letter was written, was a member of the Council.

The expedition under Major Andrew Lewis, referred to, was what was known as the "Shawnee Expedition," and as Mr. Maury suspected would be the case, it had little effect.

At the session of March, 1756, the Virginia Assembly directed the building of a chain of forts from "Henry Enochs on Great-Cape-Capon, in the county of Hampshire," to the "South Fork of Mayo-River, in the county of Halifax." (*Hening*, VII, 17, 18.) Many of these forts were used throughout the French and Indian wars.—Ed.

acquainted, as, it is conceived, public Utility requires they should.

Not to mention the repeated Acts of Hostility and Violence, committed on our Fellow-subjects, in the remoter Parts of this Colony, by those bloody Instruments of french Policy, the Indians; nor the great Extent of country, on both Sides the Alleganies, now almost totally depopulated by them; which are Facts long since notorious to all: I beg Leave to inform You, that such Numbers of People have lately transplanted themselves hence into the more southerly Governments, as must appear almost incredible to any, except such, as have had an Opportunity of knowing it, either from their own Observation, or the credible Information of others, or both. From the waters of Potomac, James and Roanoke Rivers on the eastern Side of the above-mentioned Ridge of Mountains, nay from the same Side of the blue Ridge, hundreds of Families have, within these few Months past, removed, deserted their Habitations, & conveyed themselves & their most valuable Movables into other Governments. By Bedford Court-house in one week, 'tis said, &, I believe, truly said, near 300 Persons, Inhabitants of this Colony, past, on their way to Carolina. And I have it from good Authors, that no later in Autumn than October, 5000 more had crossed James River, only at one Ferry, that at Goochland Court-house, journeying towards the same place: &, doubtless, great Numbers have past that way since. And altho' these had not all been settled in Virginia, yet a large Proportion of them had. From all the upper Counties, even those on this Side of the blue Hills, great Numbers are daily following, & others preparing to follow in the Spring. Scarce do I know a Neighbourhood, but what has lost some Families, & expects quickly to lose more. And, what aggravates the Misfortune, is, that many of these are, not the Idler & the Vagrant, Pests of Society, whom 'tis ever salutary to a Body politic to purge off, but the honest & industrious, Men of Worth & Property, whom 'tis an Evil, at any Time, to a Community to lose, but is most eminently so to our own, in the present critical Juncture. Now, Sir, as many

have thus quitted fertile Lands & comfortable Habitations, quitted their Friends & Relations & Country, to which they were attached by many powerful & indearing Ties; weighty, we may conclude, have been the Reasons, at least these People have thought them such, which have already determined many to act as they have, & will determine others to follow their example. But, whether they be weighty, in themselves, or not; 'tis certain, they are such, as reduce the Number of our Inhabitants very fast, to the great Detriment & Loss of the public. As I have had an Opportunity of conversing with some upon the Subject, & have thence discovered what Considerations have influenced their Conduct, in this Point: I shall take the Liberty, briefly & candidly, to represent them to your Honour. After which You may judge, whether they have any weight, or not; that, if they have, the Gentlemen, whose Province it is to direct public Affairs, may, if, upon Enquiry, they find this Information founded on Truth, consider, what will be the properest Remedies for a timely Prevention of the further Progress of this Consumption in our political constitution.

Altho' then, it be natural to suspect, that the heavy Taxes, which the pressing Exigences of our Country have rendered necessary, possibly may, &, perhaps, actually have determined some to remove; yet, I know none, who have been prevailed on to do so, purely & simply, from that Consideration. But, Sir, an unhappy Concurrence of various sinister Events & untoward Circumstances, preventing the Colony from reaping Advantages from the Sums, levied & expended, adequate to those Sums; together with a Suspicion & Dread, that their Persons & Possessions are not sufficiently secured against the Cruelties & Depredations of the Savages; are the prevailing & principal Inducements to these People thus, to their own private, as well as to the public, Detriment and Loss, to become voluntary Exiles. Gentlemen in the Administration may think, & I believe do think, that abundant Provision has been already made for their Protection & Defence, as well by the several Companies of Rangers, sent out in the all, as by the Present

Expedition against the Shawanese. Whether the former of these Measures has answered all the good Ends, which, I presume, the Government had in view, when it was resolved on, I undertake not to affirm or deny. And whether the latter will, no Man, not endowed with the prophetic Gift, can foretel. However, I hope it will, & wish it may. But this is foreign to my urpose, which is to inform your Honour of the Sentiments & Reasonings of these People, who are daily seeking new Habitations out of the Government. And they, Sir, notwithstanding those Measures, & all others, which have yet been pursued with the Views, still look upon our Frontiers to be in so insecure & defenceless a State, as to justify their Apprehensions, that the same bloody Tragedies, which were acted at the Expence of their Neighbours last Summer, will, if they stay, be reacted the insuing at their own. If only fifty Indians, which they believe to be as many as were upon our Borders in the South-west last Year, of which they, perhaps, are the best Judges, made such Havoc & Desolation; drove off upwards of two Thousand Head of Cattle & Horses to support themselves & the Enemy at Duquesne, besides what they wantonly destroyed; & if so contemptible a Band depopulated & ravaged so large a Tract of Country: they suspect, much greater Numbers, animated & tempted by the extraordinary Success of those few, will e'er long renew the same Hostilities, &, consequently, much greater and more extensive Mischiefs insue. And certain it is, should that be attempted, & no effectual Methods pursued to defeat the Attempt, many Parts of the Colony, now several Miles within their Frontiers, will shortly become frontier in their Turn. As to the Expedition under the Command of Major Lewis, they regard it as a Mark of the Government's Concern for their particular Security, & of it's Attention to the Welfare of the Community at large. But yet, the Success of it being uncertain, they think it not prudent to risque all that is dear in Life, nay Life itself, upon such an Uncertainty. The Shawnese, they stedfastly believe, because it has been confidently affirmed by Persons, whom they judge worthy of

some Credit, have long since received Intelligence of the March & Destination of that Party of Cherokees, who are to act in Concert with the Forces of this Colony, that are under the Command of Major Lewis. And hence 'tis concluded, they may have Time, either to augment their Strength sufficiently to face us in the Field, or else to retreat beyond the Reach of our Forces, for a While; in Order, either when they shall be withdrawn, or even while they continue there in one Body, to return upon our back Settlements by some or other of those various Passes thro' the Alleghany Mountains, which it will be utterly impracticable for those Forces, in that united State, to command or guard. And, should this Expedition, for these or any other Reasons, succeed no better, than some others have; what our remote Inhabitants have heretofore suffered is judged but trifling, compared with what they would suffer, in Consequence of so disastrous an Event. A Dread of which, it is greatly to be feared, would determine all the People beyond the blue Ridge instantly to abandon their Habitations, & retreat to a Place of greater Security; which they, as well as those, who have already removed thither, expect to find in the western Parts of the Carolinas, in the Neighborhood, & under Shelter, of the Catawbias and Cherokees; whither, 'tis supposed, the northern Indians will, at present, scarce think proper to make any Inroads. For, Sir, in the present State of our Frontiers, they must be sensible, if they judge of the future from the past, that they may, with less Trouble & Hazard, get both Scalps & Plunder in Virginia, as valuable, nay more valuable, than they can well expect in the Neighbourhood of those two Nations, who are truly formidable to them, one for it's martial & enterprizing Genius, the other for it's Numbers. It is generally believed by the most prudent & discerning in this Part of the Country, that, during the present Troubles, nothing will put a Stop to this prevailing Humour of removing southerly, because nothing will convince the People they are safe, but a Line of Forts, extended quite across the Colony, as a Barrier against Incursions of the Barbarians. And that this would, is quite probable; because a

trifling Fort upon Jackson's River, a little below the Mouth of Carpenter's Creek, and another, more trifling, at the Dunckards Bottom, have, notwithstanding surrounding Dangers, kept their neighbouring Settlements tolerably well together. And, Sir, if this be the case, 'tis submitted to superior Judgments to decide, whether it will be a prudent & necessary Measure or not, to have such a Chain of Forts thrown across the Colony with all convenient Speed. And, should such a Scheme be resolved on, the following line might, perhaps, upon being viewed by proper Persons, be found not altogether inconvenient to build them on; beginning near the Head of Pattison's Creek on Potomac (for there is one already built 13 Miles from it's Mouth) continued up the western Branch of Wopocoms, down Jackson's River & up Craig's Creek, crossing the Allegany mountains to the Horse-shoe Bottom on New River, thence up to the Head of Reedy Creek, & extended down Holston quite to the Latitude of our southern Boundary. Each of these Forts might be built from other about 30 Miles distant, more or less, according as the natural Situation of the Grounds & some other requisite Conveniences would admit. Each too might be garrisoned by a Company of about 50 Men, part Whites, & part Indians. As the whole Distance, upon a direct Course, is not more than 300 Miles, ten or twelve Forts might be sufficient to secure our whole Frontier, and 600 Men at most garrison the whole Chain. Should it be further determined, that no person bear any Commission in these Garrisons, except such, as, besides some little Fortune & good Character, are expert Woodsmen; it might still further ascertain the Success of this Measure. And, as his Honour, the Governor, cannot be so well acquainted with the Persons, who may be best qualified to command these Companies, as several Gentlemen in the upper Counties are, who are themselves experienced Woodsmen, & personally know such, as are most proper for such an office, both on that & the other Accounts just mentioned; would it be amiss, should Directions be given to the several Courts of Augusta, Frederic & Hamshire, Halifax, Lunenburg, Prince-Edward & Bedford, Albemarle &

Louisa, Orange, Culpepper, Prince William & Fairfax, each to recommend three or four Persons, the best qualified in their respective Counties for that Business, out of whom his Honour might make Choice of such, as he should think fit? Perhaps too it might be necessary to appoint one general Commander over all these Garrisons; who, upon any Emergency, by draughting a certain Quota from each, would be inabled more speedly & more effectually to relieve any particular Place in Distress, as well as to harrass & intercept any Parties of the Enemy, daring enough to adventure within the Line. And were these Forttresses built from each other at the Distance mentioned above, the whole Extent of Country, from North to South, would be daily ranged & explored, & a constant Communication maintained between Fort & Fort. For each Garrison would bear dividing into six Parties. Two might, in regular Rotation, be constantly imployed in scouring the Woods; one about 15 Miles to the Northward, the other about as far southward, of their own Fort: while the remaining four continued at Home, both for their own Refreshment, & for the necessary Guard & Defence of their Post. Each of the two Dividends upon Duty might be obliged to range from their own Fort, as above proposed, to some Distance, as nearly central, as may be, between it & that towards which they respectively patroll. The scouting Parties of these two Forts might there meet each other in the Evening; camp together that Night for mutual Security; and, before they set out for their several Homes in the Morning, make an Appointment, where the two next Detachments from the two same Garrisons, to be next upon Duty, should meet & incamp the succeeding Day; taking care thus, as frequently as may be, to change their Places of Incampment: in order, both to render the Passage of the Enemy by Night or by Day more precarious; & more effectually to secure themselves against a Surprize in the Night; which might also be further guarded against, were each Party to have some few well-tutored & mettalsome Dogs, which have as strong an Antipathy against Indians, as Indians have against them. And by these Parties, thus frequently



meeting, any Intelligence might be easily transmitted from one Extremity of this Line to the other, or from any of the intermediate Stations to either Extremity, without any extraordinary Trouble or Expence. And as all these Garrisons might be under these same Regulations, and Detachments from each be daily ranging, in the Manner above mentioned, the Country thereabout would be thoroughly searched & guarded, and yet the Soldiers, thro' this alternate Vicissitude of Exercise and Repose, not obliged to undergo any immoderate Fatigue: for two Thirds of their Time would be spent at their Fort, and only one Third upon Duty out of Doors. And, Sir, do not you think it highly probable, that a Scheme of this Sort, of which this may be considered as a very imperfect Sketch, judiciously planned and diligently executed, would render it extremely hazardous for the Enemy, notwithstanding their celebrated Activity and Expertness in the Woods and the Ruggedness and Unevenness of those Grounds, to make any Inroads upon us, with Success? The Diligence and Fidelity, that may be expected in Officers, thus cautiously chosen; and the several Garrisons under their command having a proper Intermixture of Indians, no less subtil than the Enemy, as bold, and equally well versed in all the barbarian Arts and Stratagems of War; would be much more formidable to those brutal Ravagers and embarrass them much more, than many Thousands of the best disciplined Troops; would either keep them at due Distance, or, should they adventure within the Barrier, severely chastise their Insolence and Temerity. Such a Measure too, besides affording the People in that Quarter greater Security than they have ever yet had, it is supposed, will be less expensive to the Government, than any other, that seems to promise equal Success. For good Judges of Work think, that each of these Forts, together with its necessary Buildings, will not cost more than forty Pounds at most, provided the several Companies be obliged to assist the Undertaker in felling, hewing, sawing and conveying the Timbers into Place, in digging the Trenches for the Stockades, and in other Services of that Nature; and provided Forts, built after

the Model, in the Manner, and of the Dimensions of that, of which you herewith receive a Plan, be judged sufficient to answer the End. Men too may be had to garrison them with but little Bounty-mony, perhaps, without any; provided the Government would give them Assurance, that they should not be obliged to enter into any other Service: and, when inlisted, they would be much less apt to desert, than Men are from Corps of a different Denomination, and destined for Services of a different Nature. Moreover the Indians in these Garrisons will certainly require less costly Clothing, and, perhaps, be satisfied with lower Wages, than Soldiers are commonly allowed. The white Men also would be clothed as cheap at least as Soldiers regularly regimented. Several Officers too, thought necessary in Corps of this latter Denomination, would here be needless: such as Colonel, Lieutenant-Colonel, Major, Commissary, Adjutant, Quarter-master, nay Pay-master. For the same Person, whom the Government thinks worthy to be intrusted with the Command of one of these Garrisons, may, probably, be thought worthy to be intrusted also from Time to Time with the Sums necessary for a Payment of it's Wages. And, if I am not mistaken in the Pay these several officers in the Virginia Regiment receive, which according to my Calculation amounts to £177-10 a Month; the 600 Men in these Forts will be cheaper to the Colony, than the same Number regimented, by £2130, per annum; out of which however we are to deduct the Pay of an Officer to command the whole, which, rated at 20/ per Day; a very bountiful and genteel Allowance, leaves an annual Saving of £1765. As some of these Forts will be convenient to the back inhabitants, the Garrisons may be fed at much less Expence, than the Colony's Troops at Fort Cumberland can; because the heavy Charges of a long Carriage will be saved. Savings, which well merit the Attention of a Government, most especially when it's Treasury is well nigh exhausted, and it's Subjects so little able to replenish it, as our Country-men at present confessedly are. But there is another very considerable Expence, which this Method of guarding our Frontiers will, probably, render need-

less; and which, therefore, may be saved. For draughting the Militia might, perhaps, hence be rendered unnecessary; which, for aught we know to the contrary, the Colony may, otherwise, be necessitated to do. And should only 600 of them be employed in the Defence of our Frontiers, upon the Pay, established by Act of Assembly; it would be such an Addition to that Load of Debts and Taxes, under which the Country at Present labours, as, together with it's present unhappy Situation, must infallibly sink it, beyond a Possibility of Recovery thro' a course of many Years, how favourable a Turn soever it's present Circumstances may take? Such a Chain of Fortresses would also bring back the Fugitives to their deserted Plantations; would encourage others to prosecute anew their projected Schemes of seating the back Lands, which the present unhappy Contests between the Courts of London and Versailles have deterred them from executing; and invite new Settlers thither from several of the neighbouring Colonies, as well as from the crowded and inferior Parts of our own. Hence a considerable Augmentation of Numbers, which has ever been thought an Augmentation of Power and Wealth. Industry likewise would hence revive, which, in the remoter Parts of the Colony, has, for some Time past, been in a stagnant State; occasioned by the Husbandman's Uncertainty, whether he were labouring to support the Enemies of his Country, or to maintain his own Family. Hence too the People would soon cease to remove, as they would then believe, that the Government had fallen upon the most, if not only, effectual Course to secure it's Frontiers; which, as Matters now stand, are daily contracting, and drawing still nearer and nearer to it's Centre. Whereas, in the present perilous and melancholy State of Things, the People, terrified at the horrid Acts of Cruelty and Outrage, to which our Brethren in the southern and northern Corners of our Frontiers, as well as our Neighbors in Maryland and Pennsylvania have been and are still exposed; and dreading, that they too must next fall a Sacrifice to the butchering Hands of the Savages; will, from a Principle of Self-preservation, continue to trans-

plant themselves to a Place of greater Safety, except some Measures be speedily pursued to prevent it.

The Government, it is said, has had it under Consideration to establish a Factory somewhere upon Holston for supplying the Indians with Goods, and to erect a Fort for it's Protection; which might make one of the above mentioned Chain. General, I believe, would be the satisfaction of all Lovers of their Country, were so wise and politic a Scheme executed. It would, doubtless, be productive of many salutary Effects. It might be a Mean of giving still further Security to our remoter Inhabitants, both at present and in Time to come. It might induce the Cherokees to resume their Project of making a Settlement near the great Island in Holston, which they are said to have been deterred from completing by the northern Indians, spirited up against them by the French; who, thro' their usual Sagacity and Penetration, quickly discovered, what an additional Strength a Settlement of that Nation there would be to our western Planters: Tis highly probable too, that this would happily retrieve the Interest, which we have lost with the Twightwees, Weandôts, Shawanese, & several other indian Tribes; whose Friendship, it has been generally thought, we have lost for want of proper Regulations in the indian Trade, and because our indian Traders have, for the most Part, been so far from dealing honestly and fairly with them, that they have shamefully and scandalously imposed on them, equally to the Prejudice of the public Character and public Interest. As the Government can afford to supply them with Necessaries on much better Terms, than the French possibly can, more especially should General Shirley compleat the Interruption of their Communication between Frontenac, and Niagara and their Forts on Erie and Ohio; such a Measure would open a most profitable Trade and establish a useful and lasting Friendship between this Colony and those Indians, as well as many other Nations upon the western Banks and Waters of that River, at present but little known to us. And Sir, as we frequently see Nations, much more polite and civilized than these Barbarians, actuated chiefly by Interest in making and

breaking Treaties, in forming and dissolving Alliances: may we not expect, that many Tribes, not only such, as have hitherto continued neutral, but even such, as are actually now engaged in the french Service, would, were some such Measures as these pursued, no longer side with our Enemies, and fight their Battles, but declare for that Party, to which their Interest would incline them? And, surely, it will be much more eligible and less expensive to put an End to their Hostilities by pacific than military Methods. 'Tis trus, Sir, the Establishment of such a Factory would be attended with considerable Expence at the first Outset. But, when it is considered, that indian Commodities are very valuable, and purchased for less than the real Worth in Europe; and that those, which they would receive from us in Exchange, might be sold to them at a good Advance, and yet much cheaper, than either the Enemy or our own Traders have been thought to sell them; and also, that this might, in some Degree, supercede the Necessity of the frequent and expensive Presents made to those People: there seems scarce any Room to doubt, but that the Government, in a short Time, would be amply reimbursed, provided the Persons, intrusted with the Management of this important Business, be defective neither in Ability nor Integrity. The former of these Defects might be tolerably well guarded against by a prudent and judicious Choice of Factors; and the latter, in great Measure, by the wholesome Regulations under which the wisdom and care of the Gentlemen in the Administration might reduce this Trade, and the Persons, who are to manage it for the Public: upon which, in Truth, the Success of the whole Project must mainly depend. And, Sir, should such a Factory be attended with all the Advantages, with which there is Room to expect it would; any reasonable Expence, which the Public could bear, that might be judged necessary for the Establishment of it, would, I presume, notwithstanding our present Poverty, be cheerfully borne. One happy Consequence of it would be, that, in the Course of a few Years, we should have a strong Barrier of friendly Indians to the westward, equally formidable to our Enemies, and bene-

ficial to ourselves. The Advantages of which are extremely obvious. and so very weighty and important, that in any Competitions between european Powers for Territory upon this Part of the Continent, the Scale of that Competitor, who enjoys them in the greatest Degree, will ever preponderate. And yet, Sir, happy for us, these Advantages, it is imagined, are certainly attainable by the Method under Consideration; a Method, which not only promises the Attainment of that principal End; but which, instead of being an Expence and Burden to the Community, might, probably, after a few Years, by good Management and wise Regulations, annually bring a considerable Sum into the public Treasury. The French, fully apprized of the Benefits accruing from a Trade and Friendship with the Indians, spare neither Pains nor Cost, leave no Art unpractised, nor Expedient unattempted, to promote the one and cultivate the other: Points, extremely essential to the Success of their grand Plan, as wisely concerted at first, as it has since been steddily pursued, securing and extending their own Settlements in America, and interrupting, annoying and harassing ours. Our own Experience convinces us how many Advantages they have already reaped from establishing a Trade and cultivating a friendly Correspondence with them; and the Evils, attenddant on the Want of these, we have severely felt to our Cost.

As my only aim in giving your Honour this Trouble has been a Regard for the public Good; I trust, from Your known Candor and Humanity, as well as Concern for the Prosperity and Welfare of the Community, that the Goodness of the Intent will be admitted as an apology for any Errors on Defects either in the Matter or Form of the Contents of these Sheets: & therefore, without trespassing further on your Patience by offering any other, give me Leave to conclude with a Declaration, that I am a sincere Friend to my Country and therefore, Honourable Sir,

Your Honour's most obedient Humble Servant,

JAMES MAURY.